



Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea

Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet

Donna and Donnie Smith Demonstrate Gourd Artistry at Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea

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BEREA, Ky. – Donna and Donnie Smith, of Waco, will demonstrate their carved and painted gourds from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23, at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea.

The Smiths' journey as craftspeople began 23 years ago, when they planted gourds by their back porch. Donna eventually left her full-time job, and she and her husband, Donnie, became full-time gourd artists. Their work is a partnership, with Donna decorating the gourds with images that enhance the gourds' natural shapes. Some of the gourds become vases, as long-neck gourds are embellished with vertical images.

Donna, who has a background in graphic design, draws on the gourd first with pencil, and then with a wood-burning tool. The gourds are next painted with watercolors, inks, dyes and water-based stains, and sealed with a clear acrylic.

Most of the Smiths' gourds are raised on their 5-acre farm. A good dried gourd, though, is just the beginning. Each gourd must be washed to remove the outer skin which has molded and left an interesting pattern and texture on the gourd surface. Once the gourd is clean, it is sanded before its lid is cut. Donnie is constantly finding creative ways to cut gourds, transforming them into baskets and lidded vessels using cut-out filigreed designs that enhance and integrate the painted surface and form. Their newest designs have wooden inset bases that allow greater stability for the more vertical and asymmetrical gourds.

Gourds by Donna and Donnie Smith are regularly available at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea, located at 200 Artisan Way, just off Interstate -75 at Berea Exit 77. The center's exhibits, shopping and travel information areas are open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the cafe is open from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission is free.

The center currently features works by more than 650 artisans from more than 100 counties all across the Commonwealth. A special exhibit, "The Threads that Bind: Textile Works by Kentucky Artisans," is on display through Feb. 23, 2013. For information about the center's events call 859-985-5448, visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kentucky.artisan.center, or go to the center's website at www.kentuckyartisancenter.ky.gov.

The Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea is an agency in the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.



Photos left to right: Donna Smith paints a gourd; Donnie Smith cuts decorative openings in a gourd; a finished lidded gourd by Donna and Donnie Smith.